

designed by Robert Gillmor and a back cover with reproduction of the first issue of the *Bulletin* describing the Inaugural Meeting of the Club on 5 October 1892 and of the programme of the joint meeting of the BOU/BOC at dinner on 8 March 1939. The latter was referred to as the "last of an era" by the late Phyllis Barclay-Smith in her reminiscences, which together with those of 7 other of the Club's most senior members formed a most entertaining and intriguing section of the issue. It was sad that 3 of these members, Miss Barclay-Smith, Dr. David Bannerman and Baron de Worms, had died before their contributions were published.

The second and major half of the issue was devoted to papers on the advances of ornithology in the past half century and covered in 18 important zoo-geographical reviews a worldwide scene, omitting unfortunately Scandinavia, the Middle East and the Pacific. The Editor is very glad to be able to thank the authors for their ungrudging co-operation, involving them in considerable work and research as well as calling on their expertise on behalf of the Club.

The issue opened with the Chairman's Foreword, in particular thanking The Royal Society, the Mount Trust, the B.O.U. and British Petroleum Co. Limited for their generous financial support. This was followed by a short and enlightening history of both the Club and the *Bulletin* by the Hon. Sec., Ronald Peal, and for once a lucid explanation was given as to why the Club's centennial volume and the Club's centenary do not coincide.

The year's remaining 3 issues of the *Bulletin* consisted of 106 pages and happily have covered much the same scale of subjects as in recent years. With one exception (Vol. 53) Vol. 100 was the largest annual volume of the *Bulletin* in the history of the Club. Delay in publication has inevitably been increased by devoting one issue to invited papers, but it seems likely that the delay in 1981 will not be greatly longer than the usual 6-9 months.

The audited accounts for 1980, which are not yet available, will be tabled at the Annual General Meeting and published in a later number of the *Bulletin*. Members wishing to see a copy may enquire from the Honorary Treasurer.

The seven hundred and thirty-second Meeting of the Club was held in the Senior Common Room, South Side, Imperial College, London, S.W.7 on Tuesday 13 January 1981. The attendance was 30 Members and 10 guests.

Members present were: D. R. CALDER (*Chairman*), Captain Sir THOMAS BARLOW, K. BRETTON, Dr. G. BEVEN, Mrs. DIANA BRADLEY, Dr. R. A. CHEKE, R. CHANCELLOR, P. J. CONDER, S. CRAMP, The Earl of CRANBROOK, O. J. H. DAVIES, R. J. FARMER, A. GIBBS, D. GRIFFIN, P. HOGG, M. J. L. HURWOOD, A. M. HUTSON, Revd. G. K. McCULLOCH, C. F. MANN, Dr. J. F. MONK, E. M. NICHOLSON, R. E. F. PEAL, P. S. REDMAN, P. J. SELLAR, S. A. H. STATHAM, M. R. TAYLOR, K. V. THOMPSON, A. VITTERY, J. F. WALSH and Lieut.-Col. T. C. WHITE.

Guests present were: Mrs. G. BEVEN, D. BRADLEY, Miss SARAH CONDER, Mrs. P. HOGG, Mrs. I. McCULLOCH, B. V. M. O'BRIEN, W. H. PARK, Mrs. R. E. F. PEAL, R. W. TURNER and Mrs. B. VITTERY.

Mr. Stanley Cramp, O.B.E., spoke on "Ornithology and Conservation in Europe". In the course of his interesting address he dealt especially with the recent E.E.C. Directive on bird protection.

A note on Bensch's Rail *Monias benschi* from Madagascar

by D. A. Turner

Received 28 April 1980

Rand (1936) describes Bensch's Rail as "a terrestrial bird of the low brush forest in the Sub-desert", commenting that there was no evidence at all that it ever flies. Later Milon *et al.* (1973) merely comment that like other members of the family it flies poorly and always seems to prefer to escape from danger by running away, no matter what degree of danger facing it.

During the past 10 years I have had the opportunity of spending many hours observing this species in southwestern Madagascar where its range

appears to be restricted to the dense *Didiera* woodland between two rivers, the Mangoky and the Fiherenana. Over much of the area it is common and at times abundant, and once its distinctive call is known, it is quite easy to locate as small groups move about through the dry *Didiera* woodland that is so characteristic of the southwestern corner of the island.

In the evening of 19 February 1980 while walking through an area of dense *Didierea* thicket some 28 km north of Tulear, I heard a group of these birds calling, but for some time was unable to locate them, until quite unexpectedly I noticed a pair calling from the lower branches of a tree 10–12 feet above the ground. This in itself surprised me as I too had always believed them to be entirely terrestrial in habits. The pair continued to climb around the branches of the tree despite their rather ungainly gait, constantly bobbing up and down just as they do when walking through the brush. As dusk was fast approaching I assumed the birds were settling down to roost for the night, but after a few moments and obviously aware of my presence less than 20 yards away they became rather agitated and to my utter amazement flew away.

Whereas the female flew down to the ground with a rather weak flight, the male flew strongly and purposefully on an almost direct flight for some yards until lost from sight in the dense brush. This is, as far as I can ascertain, the first instance of this species, or any Mesite actually flying, and certainly disproves all previous statements that *Monias benschi* is a flightless bird. Although not in any way related to the Rallidae, all three Mesites of Madagascar possess well developed wings, and it seems probable that all are quite capable of flight, but that due to their being terrestrial birds of either forest or dense scrub they rarely need to do so.

References:

- Milon, P., Petter, J. J. & Randrianasolo, G. 1973. Faune de Madagascar, XXXV Oiseaux. ORSTOM Tananarive: CNRS Paris.
 Rand, A. L. 1936. The distribution and habits of Madagascar birds. *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 72: 143–499.

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A new subspecies of *Anairetes agraphia* (Tyrannidae) from northern Peru

by Thomas S. Schulenberg and Gary L. Graham

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In 1978 we were part of a field party from the Louisiana State University Museum of Zoology (LSUMZ) that conducted an ornithological investigation of the previously unexplored mountains lying between the Ríos Utcubamba and Chiriaco, in the Department of Amazonas, northern Peru. This range, known locally as the Cordillera Colán, rises above the arid Rio Marañon valley to an elevation of at least 3450 m. At approximately 3050 m, cloud forest gives way to *pajonal*, a wet grassland with scattered bushes and low trees. In the upper reaches of the forest, from 2950 m up to treeline, we